

LETTER FROM J. K. PAULDING.
HYON PARK, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, N. Y.,
September 6, 1851.

GENTLEMEN: Your letter directed to me at New York, conveying an invitation to address a meeting of the citizens of Charleston, S. C., on the 17th inst., has just reached me at this place, where I now reside.

For the compliment thus tendered, and the language in which it is conveyed, I beg you to accept my acknowledgments, accompanied by regrets that I cannot comply with your wishes. Distance and space, the burden of years I should bear with me, and, more than all, my incapacity for public speaking, compel me to decline a task for which I am totally unfitted. What I have to say, I therefore hope you will permit me to address to you through a medium to which I am more accustomed.

As it appears from the tenor of your letter, that you are already sufficiently aware of the opinion I entertain with respect to what is whimsically called the compromise, I will only trouble you with a brief recapitulation. In my view, it was a gross and palpable violation of that great fundamental principle of State equality which prevails every provision of the Constitution, and forms the basis of this confederation; and a most unjustifiable attack on the rights, interests, safety, and happiness of one half the States composing it, accompanied by insult and obliquity; a pretended concession, wrested by undue force of numbers from a minority; and that, in its consequences, it will prove more fatal to the repose, prosperity, and happiness, if not the very existence of the Union, than any measure that may be resorted to in attempting to obtain redress for the past or security for the future.

Such being my view of the subject, I am, and always have been, of opinion that the stand originally taken by South Carolina, and most of the Southern States, in opposition to the principles embodied in that series of measures, was not only justifiable, but demanded by a proper regard for their rights and their honor; and that an abandonment of the position they then assumed, and an acquiescence in measures they repeatedly declared they would resist "at all hazards and to the last extreme city," was less accompanied by a frank acknowledgment of having been wrong in the first instance, would, in the language of the patrist resolutions, be "to surrender to your letter, be what I say could not submit to without dishonor." If such an abandonment were the result of a subsequent conviction of having greatly erred in making them, it would be honorable and magnanimous. But such appears not to be the case, since even the advocates of acquiescence still continue to assert the principles on which those pledges and declarations were based as well as the wrongs which first called them forth.

The Association is, I believe, right in its second resolution—declaring its belief that the co-operation of any of the Southern States with South Carolina, either in resistance or secession, is at least improbable, so long as the influence and patronage of the General Government are arrayed against State rights. Nor do I see any reason for believing that any probable change of administration will produce a change of measures; since, as you will perceive, from their repeated declarations, all parties in the North unite in denouncing slavery, and maintaining the constitutional right of Congress, as well as its inflexible duty, to prohibit its extension to any State that may hereafter be admitted into the Union. From all present appearances, the principles embodied in the compromise will continue to be the basis of the future policy of the Government. It seems all surprising, that the States, which have submitted to past, will be equally quiescent under future wrongs.

Having thus briefly stated my views with regard to your first and second, I will now revert to your last and most important resolution, namely: "that failing in a reasonable time to obtain the co-operation of the other Southern States, South Carolina should alone withdraw from the Union."

It seems rather late in the day to be called on to combat the old exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, the assertion of which cost one monarch his head, and sent another into perpetual exile. Yet, as that doctrine has lately been revived by some of the highest names of the Republic, it calls for a passing notice in connection with the subject of this letter. It seems strange, too, that this long buried monster, which received its death wounds in the two revolutions of England and America, should have been dug up and resuscitated by distinguished Democratic republican statesmen. From all but the darkest regions of the civilized world this portentous phantom has been banished, as I would appear, only to find refuge in that which professes to be most free and enlightened. There is not a European writer, or statesman, or theologian, of any established reputation, that would venture to proclaim the slavish principles which have been asserted by republican leaders in the halls of a Congress of Republican States.

A thorough discussion of this doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, on the part of equal members of a confederation of States, would require more space than is proper for me to occupy, and more time than you can spare on this occasion, nor do I deem it necessary. The right of resistance by force, as respects States and communities, is only an extension of the individual right of self defence, which is a law of nature, antecedent and paramount to all laws, and all constitutions; which cannot be abridged or surrendered by the adoption of any system of social organization. This doctrine is established beyond controversy, by the irreverent arguments of Sidney and Locke; by the assent of all the great ancient as well as modern writers on the Law of nature and nations; and, if such were not the case, it has always been, and always will be, self-evident when the occasion arises, in opposition to all authorities. It is true, that none of the writers who assert or concede the right of resistance, have attempted to define the precise line where resistance becomes justifiable, because it is not susceptible of definition. It is a matter of feeling, and can neither be analyzed nor defined.

An eminent American statesman, high in office and a candidate for still higher honors, whose opinions I wish to treat with all due respect, has lately attempted to establish a broad distinction between revolution and secession; in other words, the right to resist, and the right of retreating out of reach of the necessity of resorting to resistance. His position, if I rightly comprehend him, is, that though a people or State may have a right to resist by force in certain contingencies, they have none to retire peacefully beyond the reach of injury and oppression. It seems they have no alternative; they must either peacefully submit, or forcibly resist, for they cannot get out of the way. It follows, that all radical changes in the political relations of a State with a confederation of States, must necessarily be brought about by violence and bloody contentions. Those who cannot live together in peace, must not part in peace; they must resort to the right of the strongest and fight it out!

Thus the extermination of a portion of our fellow creatures, perhaps our countrymen, is an indispensable preliminary to all great political changes; and hereatons must be offered up on the altar of Liberty, before she can become a legitimate goddess. The establishment of this principle, conceding the right of revolution and denying that of secession, would, in its application to the case now under consideration, leave no resource to any member of this confederation, under the most intolerable oppression, but civil war, with all its aggravations. It leaves open no appeal to the great tribunal of reason, justice, and humanity; the right of the strongest is the right divine; and dissensions among a confederation of Christian States, can only be adjusted, like those of the forest, by a death struggle. I am aware that this has been the aim of invariable practice of mankind in every age and country; but never till now do I recollect seeing it asserted, that it was the only justifiable mode of settling controversies among States and nations; and it is with no little regret I see this doctrine sanctioned by one whose opinions are of such high authority among a large portion of the American people. I have dwelt more emphatically on this topic, because I consider the right of secession as by far the most important of all the questions involved in the present controversy; and the attack on it as one of the most mischievous, as well as dangerous, blows ever levelled at the rights of the States, all of whom are deeply interested in the issue, since those who are now the aggressors, may one day be placed in a position where it will be their only refuge from the uncontrolled despotism of a majority.

With regard to the expediency of the State of South Carolina exercising this right of secession, either now or at any future period, it would, I conceive, be presumptuous in one so far removed from the scene of action to offer his opinion, or intrude his advice. In such a crisis, South Carolina must act for herself, and rely on herself alone. I would only observe, that in taking a step so decisive as that of withdrawing from the Union, unanimity amongst her citizens, or something nearly approaching it, seems indispensable. It appears, however, that many distinguished men among you, whose reputation is national, whose opinions are entitled to great weight, and who have heretofore taken the lead in opposing the compromise, believe that the time for secession is not yet come; that the co-operation of at least a majority of the Southern States is absolutely necessary to the successful issue of such a measure; that it is best to wait for further injuries, or at least to see whether they will be attempted, and if so, whether they will produce such co-operation. Those whose views coincide with the resolutions adopted by your association, on the other hand, believe that immediate secession, or secession after "waiting a reasonable time" for the co-operation of other States, is indispensable to the safety and honor of the State of South Carolina. Which of these parties will eventually predominate remains to be seen; and until that is decided, I shall content myself with asserting the right of secession leaving the expediency of its exercise to be decided by the result. Should it be found that a very considerable minority is not only opposed, but will resist a resort to this remedy for their grievances, I conceive its immediate adoption would be hazardous in the extreme. But when great interests are at stake, much should be risked in their preservation. For myself, I will only say, that were I a citizen of South Carolina, or any other Southern State; I trust I should not be found amongst those, who, after placing themselves in front of the battle, and leading their followers to a position whence they could not retreat without dishonor, retired from the field, only, it would seem, to see if the enemy would pursue them.

A few words more, gentlemen, in order that I may not be misrepresented, and I will no longer trespass on your time or patience.

If I know myself, and the innermost feeling of my heart, I am a better friend to the Union than many of those who, while loudly professing their devotion, are steadily pursuing a course of policy that has already alienated a considerable portion of its citizens, and will as speedily bring about its dissolution. It is undeniable the influence of this attachment, that I have lent my feeble aid in opposition to that policy. Neither force nor coercion can preserve a Union voluntarily formed on the basis of perfect equality; nor do I believe it possible to preserve or perpetuate this confederation by any attempts to extend the powers of the General Government beyond the limits prescribed by the Constitution, strictly construed, agreeably to its letter and spirit. The first attempt to coerce any one of its members, will be the hand-writing on the wall, predicting the speedy and certain fate of the Union. It is not to be presumed that great States, many of them equal in extent to powerful kingdoms, and inhabited by increasing millions of freemen, jealous of their rights, brave, high spirited, and energetic, can be held together except by a voluntary cohesion. This confederation may be likened to the great system of the universe, and it is only by the benign and gentle influence of a traction, that the bright stars of our constellation can be kept in their orbits. Those who attempt to hinder or spur them, will in the end, fare like the rash fool who aspired to direct the chariot of the sun.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,
J. K. PAULDING.
To F. D. Richardson, H. Raymond, W. H. Perronneau - Committee, &c., &c., Charleston, South Carolina.

CAMDEN.

FRIDAY EVENING, SEPT. 19, 1851.

THO. J. WARREN, Editor.

Our streets have assumed quite a business appearance for a few days past—several loads of cotton have been sold, and our North Carolina friends have commenced supplying us with flour. Sales of cotton were effected during the fore part of the week at 9½; but unfavorable news has caused a decline. We quote extremes at 6 to 9½. Corn, 1½; Flour 5 to 5½; Bacon 12.

Hon. James K. Paulding.

We most earnestly commend the admirable letter of this truly great man to the careful perusal of every Southern man. There is a volume of thought in every sentence, and it is only once in an age we are able to find a James K. Paulding.

The Palmetto Flag.

We omitted in our last, to mention that we had received the first number of a neat little sheet under the above title, which has for its motto:—"We have counted the cost, and find nothing so deplorable as voluntary servitude." It is published in Charleston by Mr. Councill. Success attend his undertaking.

We have heretofore invited discussion upon the leading topics of the day, and are still willing that our columns should be used by our friends, although in some instances opposed to our political views. We will close our columns against no communication written in the right spirit, and free from personalities of an offensive character, we, of course, being the judge. We cannot give our assent to every proposition contained in the several articles of to-day's paper; we are disposed nevertheless, to give our friends credit for as much honesty as we claim, and are unwilling to proscribe any man because he may differ with us in his political notions. It is a mean and contemptible spirit, find it where you may, which would find fault, because of an honest difference of opinion.

"Where Stand the People of Kershaw—No. 1."

Under this caption, and over the signature of "Kershaw," a writer in our last, attempts to explain to the people of Kershaw District "their true position," and in probing to the bottom, the proposition of the "pledge" the State is under to secede, secession, discovers very conclusively, at least to his own satisfaction, that South Carolina is only "pledged" (if at all) "to co-operate or deliberate," as occasion may require.

In the course of the argument we are editorially mentioned. We take occasion here to state that in any of our "confidential announcements," we have had a strict regard to truth, and always base our statements upon facts, before they have publicity. Of course we take it that "Kershaw," in writing the article meant that we were mistaken in our opinion, as he might be in his, and not guilty of a wilful misstatement. An extract reads as follows:

"It seems to be plain, Mr. Editor, that the District is not pledged to secession by the election of separate State action delegates, notwithstanding your confidential announcement to the contrary." As it may be at last but a matter of opinion between us, we do not propose here to discuss the "pledges" of the State of South Carolina. She has enough, in all conscience and may require all her energy and means to redeem them. But we propose here to show that the "confidential announcement" after the election of delegates to the State Convention in February last, that "KERSHAW had planted herself on secession ground," was well founded—predicated upon the election of Messrs. Cantey, Lang and Patterson; and as Mr. Barnwell once told Mr. Clay, there is two ends to a rope, we have one end, and "KERSHAW" has the other. Now, let's see who will get hung first—Messrs. Cantey, Lang, Patterson, and other gentlemen were nominated as delegates to represent the District of Kershaw in the proposed "convention." They were interrogated by a correspondent signing himself "Buffalo," a right which as a voter and citizen he unquestionably had—they each in turn replied, which replies are familiar to the readers of the Journal. Messrs. Cantey, Lang and Patterson were each decidedly in favor of separate State action, as our last and only hope. When co-operation expires, (and we think, from present indications it is in its last dying state,) then these gentlemen would vote for the exercise of this certain and undeniable right—SECESSION.

The election was held in strict conformity to the instructions of the Legislature. Major Cantey, who is known and acknowledged to be a very ultra States Rights man—occupying very high grounds, was elected. Mr. Lang and Mr. Patterson, who were each regarded, as warm, in the cause, and secessionists of the separate sort, were also elected. It was not their fault that a large number of votes were not given, every man who was entitled, could have voted, had he manifested a desire to do so, and could have voted for gentlemen with equal claims and pretensions to intelligence, who were in favor of co-operation, and opposed to Separate Secession. If men were not disposed to exercise this prerogative, certainly those who did, are not to blame for the result which followed. If "Kershaw" was so exceedingly anxious to place the District in her true position, why did he not, turn out, and with his "probe," look into the matter well before this. It is too late in the day now, for "Kershaw" to bring up objections of that character to the election of our delegates. From "some cause" the poll was not as large as the one given in 1848 for Clerk of the Court; yet, nevertheless, it was an election, held "according to law" for Delegates to the State Convention, the result of which, enables us at this

late day, to make the following "CONFIDENTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT" without fear of contradiction:

Delegates to the State Convention in the District of Kershaw, were elected, who were known to be in favor of "Separate State Action"; who were elected by the people not only "to co-operate" and "deliberate," but to act when occasion should require. "Deliberate," yes, until dooms-day, and prepare to co-operate, and then the result will be deliberation. We regard the result of the election of Messrs. Cantey, Lang, and Patterson, as a decided intimation on the part of the people of the District of Kershaw as favorable to Separate State Action as a last and final resort. "Kershaw" may invest it with all the mystification of science, or what else he may please, it is nothing more or less than what we have claimed, in our "confidential announcements."

For the Camden Journal.

No. II.

District Meetings.

Mr. Editor: We will now consider the several District Meetings, which have been held from time to time, in order that we may determine if the People of this District have bound themselves to separate State action by the resolutions there passed. We have shown that the District is not pledged to separate State action by the election of secession delegates to the Convention—that not one half of the District voted at the election—that the issue was never presented to the small number who went to the polls in February. Now, there is but one other mode by which it could be pledged, namely, by their public resolves. At a public meeting held in Camden, March 8, 1849, Capt. Thos. Lang, Chairman, to respond to the Southern Address, an able report was read, prepared by a Committee, of which Col. Chesnut was Chairman, recommending no intercourse, also seven resolutions—the first saying, in substance, that the Union of these States was formed for the liberty and welfare of all—that when it ceased to fulfil these objects, they ceased to reverse it.

2nd. That when the Constitution was violated deliberately and systematically, this government became one which ruled by fraud and force; to such a government "we are ready to oppose our lives and fortunes."

3. That the intermeddling by the Free States and General Government with slavery in the slave States, is a violation of the Constitution to which we will not submit.

4th. Resolved, that in the recent action of Virginia, we recognize the conduct of a State ever worthy to lead the van of battles against tyrants and tyranny, and that in her efforts to maintain the liberty and equality of the States, we will stand by her side in every change of fortune.

5th. Resolved, While we are anxious to associate with, and act in concert with other States, we consider it the duty of Carolina, associated or alone, to uphold her political equality as a State.

6th. That we request the Committee of Safety, appointed in other Districts, to meet with us in Columbia in May next.

7th. That we appoint a Safety Committee of five.

These Resolutions and the accompanying Report were "unanimously sustained" by Messrs. Jas. Chesnut, Jr., J. B. Kershaw, W. M. Shannon, A. M. Kennedy, and F. J. Warren. It was shown most clearly, "that at the time, was at hand for the Starvation States to rise to action." I will venture the assertion, that not one of the gentlemen who spoke, advocated Separate State Action, on the contrary, they endeavored to show, to use the words of the Journal, "that the time was at hand for the Starvation States to rise to action,"—and assuredly no citizen of the District believed that by his concurrence in the proceedings of that meeting, he had pledged himself to that measure; indeed it was not thought of, non-intercourse was the remedy proposed and recommended, as calculated to secure our rights, and yet preserve the Union; they were not even in favor of disunion, much less Separate Secession; they proposed to seek salvation for the South, without destroying this Union. In fact, so little did they have Separate State Action in their minds, that the Journal, then under the control of Mr. Cantey, in commenting upon Col. Chesnut's Report says, if it was fully adopted throughout the South, "then the Republic might be saved, and the bonds of our Glorious Union remain unbroken;" that the Journal then, did not consider the people of this District pledged, is evident.

The next public meeting was held at Camden, July 19, 1851. Mr. John M. DeSaussure presided. Addresses were delivered by Cols. Gregg and Chesnut; Resolutions passed—met one word said about Separate State Action in them, both of the Speakers dwelt upon the necessity of a union of the South (vide Journal). In reading the official account of this meeting, one cannot help complimenting Mr. W. H. R. Workman the Secretary, for the extreme fidelity and accuracy with which the remarks of Messrs. Gregg and Chesnut are reported, and yet there is nothing in the speeches of either of the gentlemen as officially given, which has the slightest squinting towards Separate State Action, and we all can never forget, with what promptness these gentlemen defended themselves from Gen. Foote, when he accused them of advocating a doctrine, and yet notwithstanding that, there is a vague uncertain belief in the minds of some very well disposed men, that they were pledged to this measure by the action of that meeting; a careful, or even a hasty perusal of the proceedings on that occasion, will satisfy any sane man, of the fallacy of that belief, yet we have sometimes heard it intimated by men who called themselves secessionists, that they stood now, precisely where Col. Chesnut stood then, and that if there had been a change of opinion, it was not with them—meaning to insinuate thereby, that Col. Chesnut at that meeting, advocated Separate State Action—a reference to the proceedings of that meeting, and to the conclusion of Col. Chesnut's letter to Foote, will show that the insinuation is untrue. However, it is not our business to defend the consistency of Col. Chesnut's political conduct; when these insinuations receive a public and

responsible endorsement, he will, if he deems it necessary, probably defend himself; they have no immediate connection with the object of this part of this article, which is to show that those are mistaken, who deem that there was any pledge made in reference to Separate State Action at that meeting, or any talk about it.

Another public meeting was held in Camden, Sept. 24th or 26th, 1850, for the purpose of forming a Southern Rights Association. Capt. T. Lang presided. Gen. Cantey from a Committee of Twenty one, submitted a Preamble and Constitution for the Southern Rights Association, which were adopted. The Preamble was in substance as follows: That as we all owed primary allegiance to the State of South Carolina, we do hereby pledge our lives and fortunes, to sustain any course which the constituted authorities of the State may see fit to adopt.

The 2nd Article of the Constitution of the Association sets forth its objects as follows: "To organize the people of this District in support of the interests of the South—to insure concert of action between the citizens of this and other Southern States; to vindicate their rights; to maintain the Federal Compact in its original purity as the only way of preserving the Union; to support the State authorities in any measure South Carolina may adopt for her defence or that of her sister States." Art. 8th says: "This Association shall continue until the wrongs of the South are redressed in the Union or the State resume the powers delegated to the Federal Government for special purposes."

I have set forth at length and in the very words of the Constitution the objects of the Southern Rights Association, so that every citizen may see for himself, that he is no more pledged to separate State action by the Southern Rights Association, than he was by the 350 or 380 voters who elected the Delegates to the Convention—there is not the slightest pledge required in reference to that measure. Yet we have frequently heard separate State action men say that they pledged themselves to secession the day they subscribed their names to the Constitution of the Southern Rights Association. We hardly deem it worth while to argue this point with a man, who thus admits, that he pledged coolly "his life and fortune" to carry out some measure of which he was profoundly ignorant! Any man who has read the proceedings of their meetings will see that the District is not pledged to separate State action.

This, also, may be here noticed, any one who carefully looks at the objects for which these Southern Rights Associations were formed, and (the objects of all were the same) must be astonished, that any set of men should endeavor to pervert them into little party machines to isolate South Carolina, the very result the association by its formation was intended to avoid—societies formed to promote "concert of action" between the citizens of South Carolina and other Southern States—deliberately distorted and used for exactly an opposite purpose. Under the name of Southern Rights Associations, a political junta has been erected who have taken upon themselves to interpret the words "concert of action" between the citizens of this and other Southern States, and make them mean "the separation of the citizens of this State, from the citizens of all the other Southern States," he who questions their inability "must have his neck cracked," to use the expressive language of the Mercury, and to doubt their interpretation is to be politically damned. They have taken upon themselves to direct the people of Kershaw how to vote, and who to vote for! And has it come to this? are we indeed so low, as to submit to the dictation of a small club in a different District? Mr. Editor you ought by all means, sir, to publish in your columns, the Address to the voters of this Congressional District, recently pronounced in Columbia; let them see the edict; let them know what they are required to do. It may perhaps suit the neighborhood of the "Boll-pen" in the Fork, but I imagine the sturdy voters of Kershaw District will spurn with just and deserved indignation this domineering assumption of dictatorial power by a few self-appointed leaders in a different District; they are not in the habit of enquiring of other Districts how they shall vote, and least of all, of Richland.

Now having proved from the files of your own paper, Mr. Editor, that the citizens of this District are not bound to separate secession, we will now proceed to determine, if we can, to what are they bound. It must be evident from these meetings that this District has been keenly alive to the oppressions of the Federal Government, that the spirit of our citizens has risen in proportion as the magnitude of the dangers increased that they have been willing to settle this difficulty in the Union if it possibly could be done, and if that could not be done, to go out of the Union—and finally by, and at the forming of a Southern Rights Association, they pledged themselves "to support the interests of the South—to insure concert of action between the citizens of this and other States." Now the only point, it would seem, for us to decide at present would be this, will separate State action bring about that "concert of action" that we are so anxious to procure, and which is so vitally important in this great contest? I will consider this proposition in the next number of your paper, with your permission Mr. Editor.

KERSHAW.

For the Camden Journal.

The Mountain Labor; Let a House be Born.

From the columns of newspapers and from other sources, it was made evident some time since, that the voters of this Congressional District were soon to be called on to discard Cols. Preston and Chesnut from their minds and affections and to substitute in their stead, good men and true, who would carry out the ends of the "Southern Rights Associations" perverted to party uses. The project did not work well at first—agacious and proud-spirited men of both parties, saw the impropriety of using these Associations as party machinery, and declined acting in their appointed capacity. A few more pulls at the wires, however, put the machine in motion, though still working badly. (Thank God, "cracking necks" is a new business in Carolina.) Richland raised